

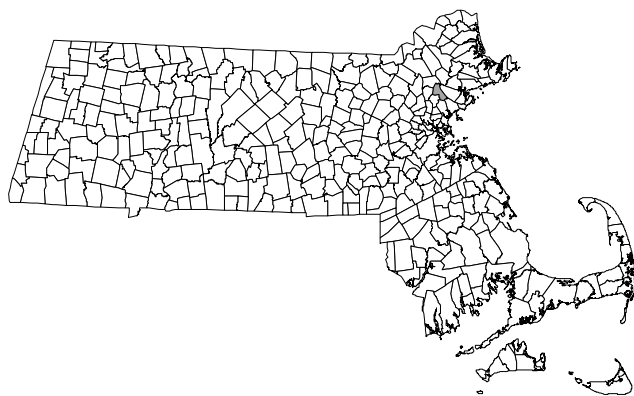


Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Route 135, Westborough, MA 01581
tel: (508) 792-7270, ext. 200; fax: (508) 792-7821
www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp

Description: The glaucous sedge (*Carex livida* var. *radicaulis*) is a perennial herb of rich fens and wet meadows. A member of the sedge family (Cyperaceae), this northern plant ranges from about 8 to 20 inches (20 to 50 cm) tall. It does not grow in tussocks as many sedges do, but instead stems are produced singly or a few together from a long, thin underground stem (called a rhizome). Its leaves are whitish-green (“glaucous”) and narrow, less than an eighth of an inch wide.

Aids to Identification: The glaucous sedge may be identified by a combination of characters. The leaves, as noted above, are thin and glaucous, and may be channeled or in-rolled (“involute”). Like many sedges, the small, inconspicuous flowers are borne in terminal, erect spikes. The terminal spike of the glaucous sedge is composed primarily or entirely of male flowers. The scales of the inflorescence are purplish-brown with a green mid-stripe. The vase-shaped achene bearing sacs (called “perigynia”) of the female flowers are long and thin in shape (although each is only a few millimeters long), and do not have apical constricted “beaks” as is characteristic of many other sedges.



Distribution in Massachusetts
1980-2006

Based on Records in Natural Heritage Database

Glaucous Sedge

Carex livida (Wahlenb.) Willd.

(*Carex livida* var. *radicaulis*)

State Status: **Endangered**

Federal Status: None



Holmgren, Noel H. *The Illustrated Companion to Gleason and Cronquist's Manual*. NY Botanical Garden. 1998.

Similar Species: Some members of this genus can be difficult to distinguish from one another, and the glaucous sedge superficially resembles a number of other sedges. A technical manual should be used to identify the different species of sedge. One sedge of wetlands that may be confused with the glaucous sedge is the slender woolly-fruited sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*), which also has very narrow leaves and terminal, erect spikes. However, as the name implies, the slender woolly-fruited sedge has perigynia that are very hairy, and those of the glaucous sedge are smooth. Another sedge that could be confused is the fen sedge (*Carex tetanica*), however its leaves are wider than those of the glaucous sedge, not involute, and not whitish in color as in the glaucous sedge. The millet-sedge (*Carex panicea*) is an introduced species in our region and looks much like the glaucous sedge, however it grows in drier conditions and has flat leaves that are not as white as those of the glaucous sedge.

Habitat: The glaucous sedge is usually found growing in northern, alkaline fens and wet meadows. In our region, the species is most common in fens of northern Maine. In Massachusetts, the glaucous sedge is known from one sloping graminoid fen. Associates of this species in New England include the mud sedge (*Carex limosa*), the slender woolly-fruited sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*), the bog sedge (*Carex exilis*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Dasiphora floribunda*), and various species of moss (especially in the genus *Sphagnum*).

Range: The glaucous sedge is a northern species with an interruptedly circumboreal distribution. In North America, the species is found from Newfoundland south to New Jersey and Minnesota, west to northern California.

Population Status in Massachusetts: The glaucous sedge is listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as Endangered. All listed species are protected from killing, collecting, possessing, or sale and from activities that would destroy habitat and thus directly or indirectly cause mortality or disrupt critical behaviors. This sedge has only been reported from Essex County in Massachusetts.

Management Recommendations: As for many rare species, the exact needs for management of the glaucous sedge are not known. The following comments are based primarily on observation of populations in Massachusetts. Searches for the glaucous sedge at its one documented occurrence have been recently unsuccessful, and it is speculated that changes in hydrology at the site have rendered conditions too dry for this species. Maintaining the hydrological conditions at sites containing the glaucous sedge may be an important management consideration. This species is intolerant of shade, and shrub succession may need to be controlled in order to maintain populations of the glaucous sedge.

Mature Perigynia Present

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Updated: October 2006

Please allow the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to continue to conserve the biodiversity of Massachusetts with a contribution for ‘endangered wildlife conservation’ on your state income tax form as these donations comprise a significant portion of our operating budget.